

Ethnobiological Studies from *Manusmruti*: VII. Non-Violence, A Prime Approach to Biotic Conservation

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ABSTRACT *Manusmruti*, has encouraged non-violence to sub human beings and vegetation from ethical, social, sympathetic, administrative, daietic and religious point of view, which has reflected on the conservation of biota from ecological stand point.

INTRODUCTION

Man, alongwith his scientific attainments in the twentieth century, has experienced a lot of threat in ecological imbalance due to pollution and cruelty towards plants and animals. The themes of non-violence (*Ahimsaa*) and humanity (*Maanavikataa*) can act as neutralising factors against the brutal activity of mankind and save the world from destruction of biota (Gandhi, 1948, 1950).

The theme of non-violence, with a popular meaning of "non killing a living being", is not only confined to human beings (*Loka hita*) but it has extended towards sub-human life (*Sarba bhoota hita*) (Tahtinen, 1976). In search for the efficacy of the contents of *Manusmruti* with modern scientific thoughts (Dash and Padhy 1997 a,b, 1998 a, b); Padhy et al., 1997 a,b), it is observed that the revealings of Manu in 2000 BC on non-violence, mostly focused on ecological perception, may be was the first step of the mankind towards conservation of biota.

Ethical Sense of Non-violence

It is advised in *Manusmruti* to observe non-violence in every walk of life and to maintain this idealism even at the time of distress.

Ssloka 2/IV states:

Aardrohenaiiba Bhootaanaamalpa Drohena Baa Punah, Yaa Bruttistaam Samaasthaaya Bipro Jeebedanaapadi. (Sl.2/IV)

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Meaning : A *Braahmana* must seek a means of subsistence which either causes no or at least little pain (to others) and leave (by that) except in time of distress (Buhler, 1886).

Ssloka 43/V states:

Gruhe Guraabaranye Baa Nibasann-Aatmabaan Dwijah, Naavedabihitaam Himsaamaapadyapi Samaacharet. (Sl.43/V)

Meaning : A twice born man of virtuous disposition, whether he dwells in (his own) house, with a teacher or in the forest must never, even in time, of distress, cause an injury (to any creature) which is not sanctioned by the *Veda* (Buhler, 1886).

Acceptance of a livelihood without injury to any creature, is a highly elevated ethical sense, but in reference to the narrations as above, it is necessary to put forth two distinct ideas of non-violence, as:

1. The *vedic* concept,
2. The ascetic sense.

The *vedic* concept of *Ahimsaa* states that only that type of injury is *himsaa* (violence) proper, which is against the *vedic* injunction. This has been reflected in the *Ssloka 43/V*. The ascetic view of '*Ahimsaa*' mean not to cause suffering to any living being at any time either by mental, vocal or bodily activities (Tahtinen, 1976). It is a big question whether *veda* ever sanctioned '*Himsaa*'? Various interpretations in this regard are in support (Macdonell and Keith, 1912) or against the *vedic* concept of *Himsaa* (Das, 1976).

In this context the Gandhian view of non-violence, derived from the ascetic sources, deserves to be discussed. It says that non-violence is not essentially regarded for all biological life, it is rather the non-exploitation of sentient creatures. Gandhi understood that non-violence is a mental behaviour. It means the absence of ill will (Gandhi, 1950).

Further the *Ssloka* 46/V states:

Yo Bandhanabadha Klessaan Praani-Naam Na Chikeershati, Sa Sarbasya Hitprepsuh Sukhamaty-antamasnute. (Sl. 46/V)

Meaning : He who does not seek to cause the sufferings of bonds and death to living creatures, (but) desires the good of all (beings), obtains endless bliss (Buhler, 1886).

Ssloka 47/V states:

Yaddhyaayati Yaturute Dhruvi Bidnaati Yatra Cha, Tadabaapnotya Yatnena Yo Hinasti Na Kinchana. (Sl. 47/V)

Meaning : He who does not injure any (creature), attains without an effort what he fixes his mind on (Buhler, 1886).

The essence of the above various campaigns on 'Ahimsaa', that amounts to devine blessings at length. But the spirit of non-violence seems to be more tough for an ascetic as evident from the following:

Ssloka 68/VI states:

*Samrakshyanaartham Yantunaam Raatra Bahana Baa Sadaa
Ssareerasyaatyaye Chaiba Sameek- Shya Basudhaam Charet. (Sl. 68/VI)*

Meaning : In order to preserve living creatures, let him always by day and by night, even with pain to his body, walk, carefully scanning the ground (Buhler, 1886).

Discouragements to Cause Violence

a. Non-violence as a Social Law:

Violence of any sort is discouraged in the society. As a summary of the verdicts, *Manu* has declared the following points:

1. Abstention from injuring (creatures)
2. Veracity
3. Abstraction from unlawfully appropriating (the goods of others)
4. Purity and
5. Control of the organs

Out of all these stated above non-violence is given the prime status (*Sl. 63/X*)

b. Social Discouragement:

The '*Ssraaddha*' is considered to be an important ritual of Hindus since the *vedic* era and the invitees to it were selective and honourable persons. The extension of invitation was prohib-

ited to persons such as (1) a seller of meat (*Sl. 152/III*); (2) a trainer of oxen, elephants or camels (*Sl. 162/III*); (3) a bird fancier (*Sl. 162/III*); (4) a breeder of sporting dogs (*Sl. 164/III*); (5) a falconer (*Sl. 164/III*); (6) he who delights in injuring living creatures (*Sl. 164/III*) and (7) a shepherd, a keeper of buffalows (*Sl. 166/III*). The sum total of the above *Sslokas* clearly indicate that persons leading their livelihood at the cost of pain directly or indirectly to animals are highly discouraged through their non entry into festive rituals. More so it is a type of social discouragement.

c. Social Degradation:

Even a person, who owns the profession of selling flesh (meat), was considered socially so much degraded that none was expected to received gifts (*Daana*) from him (*Sl. 84/IV*) (Dash and Padhy, 1997).

d. Apprehension for Sufferings in Next Life:

Hindu mythology believes in future births (re-birth). This is reflected much in the social life, and it is mostly based on the activities (*Karma*) of this life. In order to point out the mistakes of violence, which may cause sufferings in the next life (certainly a point of discouragement to commit violence), the following *Sslokas* are depicted.

Ssloka 38/V states:

*Yaabanti Passuromaani
Taabatkrutyo Ha Maaranam,
Bruthaa Passughnah Praapnoti Pre- Tya Yanmani
Yanmani. (Sl. 38/V)*

Meaning : As many hairs as the slain beast has, so often indeed will be he who killed it without a (lawful) reason suffer a violent death in future births. (Buhler, 1886).

Ssloka 15/V states:

*Yoahimsakaani Bhootaani Hinastyaatmasuk-
hechhaya,
Sa Jeebamsschamrutasschaibana Kwachitsuk-
hamedhate. (Sl. 15/V)*

Meaning : He who injures innoxious beings from a wish to (give) himself pleasure, never finds happiness, neither living nor dead (Buhler, 1886).

Encouragements for Vegetarianism

Manusmriti has number of narrations to discourage the non-vegetarian food habit of the human beings which has been reported earlier

(Dash and Padhy, 1997). Eating meat has been focused as *Pissaacha* habit, which is disease prone (Sl. 50/V) and involved cruelty to the sub-human beings. Even a permiter for slaughtering, the killer, the seller, the buyer, the cook, the caterer and the consumer of meat, all are to be considered as slayers (Sl. 51/V). The urge for eating flesh may be a natural instinct of human beings, but abstention of committing such sin brings great rewards (Sl. 56/V).

Even though it is emphasized not to eat flesh, this dictum almost puts a full stop to all sorts of slaughtering. But *Manu* has specifically mentioned a number of animal groups, prohibited for their killing (Table 1). This is an attempt to create ecological consciousness through an ethical sense.

Table 1: List of ecological subgroups not to be killed for eating purpose (vide chapter V of Manusmruti)

A. Birds:		
1. Carnivorous birds	(<i>Ssakuneen</i>)	Sl. 11/V.
2. Village habitat	(<i>Graama nibaasinih</i>)	Sl. 11/V.
3. Feeding habit with striking beaks	(<i>Pratudaan</i>)	Sl. 13/V.
4. Web footed	(<i>Jaala paadaam</i>)	Sl. 13/V.
5. Move in groups	(<i>Koyashti</i>)	Sl. 13/V.
6. Scratching with toes	(<i>Nakhabishkiiraan</i>)	Sl. 13/V.
7. Diving birds feeding on fishes	(<i>Nimajjatasscha Matsyadaan</i>)	Sl. 13/V.
8. All unknown birds	(<i>Nagnyataam</i>)	Sl. 17/V.
B. Animals:		
1. One hooped animals	(<i>Aika famsah</i>)	Sl. 11/V.
2. Fish eating animals	(<i>Matsyaadaan</i>)	Sl. 13/V.
3. Village pigs	(<i>Bid baraaha</i>)	Sl. 19/V.
4. Solitary moving animals	(<i>Aika charaa</i>)	Sl. 17/V.
5. Unknown beasts	(<i>Nagnyaataam</i>)	Sl. 17/V.
6. All five toed animals	(<i>Sarbaam panchankhaam</i>)	Sl. 17/V.
7. All fishes	(<i>Sarbasah Matsyaan</i>)	Sl. 14/V.

The above ecological sub groups on the basis of the food habit and habitat cover a broad spectrum of organisms. Non killing of these animals is an indirect multifarious approach for the conservation of animal kingdom to maintain the ecological homeostasis. Moreover the following birds in table 2 are further specified not to be killed which are much closure to human habitation.

Kings Responsibility for Animal Protection and Conservation of Plants

The seventh chapter of *Manusmruti* is devoted to declare the duties and conduct of a king.

In *Ssloka* 47 and 50 of the said chapter, the king is advised not to go for hunting. It is a cruel play which involves unwanted deaths of innocent animals and people of the *Kshatriya* race generally get tempted for such brutal activity. As the king's conduct is expected to reflect in the society, it is felt on social stand point, that the king's indulgence in hunting, should not be encouraged in order to conserve the animal biota.

The king was empowered to punish a careless driver of cart, who causes the death of any living being, such as a man, cow, elephant, camel, horse, small cattle, birds, donkey, sheep and goats, dog and pig (Sl. 296-98/VIII). Even a blow struck against animals to give them pain shall be inflicted with a fiscal punishment proportionate to the amount of pain caused. (Sl.286/VIII).

Similarly causing injury to a plant is also equally punishable.

Ssloka 285/VIII states:

Vanaspatinaam Sarbeshamupabhogo Yathaa Yathaa Tathaa Tathaa Damah Kaaryo Himsaa Yaamiti Dhaaranaa. (285/VIII).

Meaning : According to the usefulness of several (Kind of trees a fine must be inflicted for injury, that is the settled rule Buhler, 1886).

Moreover plantation was encouraged as a mark of boundaries with the following types of trees, and herbs. (Sl.246 & 247/VIII).

1. *Ficus racemosa* Linn. (*Nyagrodha*); 2. *Ficus religiosa* Linn. (*Asvattha*); 3. *Butea monosperma* (Lamk.) Taub. (*Kimsukaa*); 4. *Bombax ceiba* Linn. (*Saalmaleen*); 5. *Shorea robusta* Gaertn.f. (*Saala*); 6. *Borassus flabellifer* Linn. (*Taala*); 7. *Prosopis cineraria* (Linn.) Druce. (*Samee*). 8. Trees with milky juice (*Kshirinaaschaiba Paadapaan*) (The expected generic examples under the later group may be: i. *Calotropis*, ii. *Ficus*, iii. *Thevetia*, iv. *Euphorbia* and v. *Plumeria*, the xerophytic nature of these plants makes them withstand in unfavourable conditions and there are suitable species to conserve boundaries); 9. Clustering shrubs (*Gulmam*) 10. *Bambusa* spp; 11. Creepers (*Ballee*) and 12. Reeds, *Aristida setacea* Retz. (*Ssaraan-Kubjagulam*) (Sl. 246 and 247/VIII).

No doubt, causing death of a domesticated animal due to careless driving may be punishable. But the death of a street dog or cat in the high road and spoilage of a plant from '*Ahimsaa*' point

Table 2: List of birds specially mentioned not to be killed vide Chapter-V of Manusmriti

English Name (Buhler, 1886) (**)	Sanskrit Name(*) (Manusmriti)	Scientific Name (Ali and Futehally, 1967)
Tittibha (Plover)	Tittibha	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Sparrow	Kalabinkam	<i>Paser domesticus</i>
Plava	Plavam	<i>Charadrius dubius, Burhinus oedicephalus</i>
Hamsa (Swan)	Hamsam	<i>Anser indicus</i>
Braahamani Duck	Chakraangam	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>
Village Cock	Graama Kukkutam	<i>Gallus gallus</i>
Saarasa Crane (Storkes & Bills)	Saarasam	<i>Grus sp, Leptoptilas sp, Threskiornis melanocephala, Pseudibis papillosa, Platalea leucorodia</i>
Rajjudaala (***) (Darter, little & large cormorants, Indian shag)	Rajjudaalam	<i>Anhinga rufa, Phalacrocorax sp</i>
Wood packer	Daatyuham	<i>Picoides mahrattensis, Dinopium benghalense</i>
Parrot	Sukam	<i>Pisittacula sp</i>
Starling	Saarikaa	<i>Acridotheres tristis, Leucopsar sp</i>
Balaakaa crane	Balaakaa	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
Crane (Herons & Egrets)	Baka	<i>Ardea sp, Egretta sp, Bubulcus ibis, Ardeola grayii</i>
Cuckoo (Koel)	Kaakolam	<i>Eudynamis seolopacea</i>
Raven (crow)	Kaakam	<i>Corvus sp</i>
Khanjana (Wagtail)	Khanjaritakam	<i>Motacilla sp</i>
Peacock	Barhinaam	<i>Pavo existatus</i>

* Sanskrit names as per Manusmriti, represent an allied group of birds expressed in scientific names.

** English names in parenthesis represent names not referred properly by Buhler.

*** English names of the species could be identified after further analysis of its meaning traced out from an encyclopaedia (Prahara, 1937).

sof view, is seldom bothered by any one in the present day society. This proves the highest ethical feelings of the Vedic culture for the sub human creatures and vegetation.

Animal Sympathy and Culture

Special instructions were laid to extend sympathy to the animals, such as:

- * Let him gently place on the ground (some food) for dogs, crows and insects (Sl. 92/III). This has also reflected in the daily ritual, expected to be followed as 'Viswadeva Puja' in every Hindu family.
- * Let him not travel with untrained beasts of burden, nor with (animals) that are tormented by hunger or disease, or whose tails have been disfigured (Sl. 67/IV, Buhler, 1886).
- * Let him always travel with (beasts) without urging them much with goad (Sl. 68/IV).
- * The importance of cow in Hindu culture needs no explanation. A number of special penances are directed to perform for any injury to cow (chapter-XI). The following are some of the soft feelings of Hindu culture for the cows which is referred as Gomaataa.
- * Let him not step over a rope to which a calf is tied. (Sl. 38/IV). This is established as a

lore. This may cause injury to the fickle calf apprehending a wrong webbing of the tied rope.

- * Let him not interrupt a cow who is suckling (Sl. IV). (accepted lore).
- * It is also advised to have sufficient reserved space as pasture land around a village and thrice of that around a town for grazing. (Sl. 237/VIII).
- * Also the damage caused by a cow within ten days of her calving, should not be considered as a cattle mischief (Sl. 242/VIII).

Penance (Praayasschitta)

The importance of penance is recorded in the chapter XI of Manusmriti. A man who omits a prescribed act or performs a blamable act or cleaves to sensual enjoyments (Sl. 45/XI), either intentionally or unintentionally, is expiated from that sin by performing penance. (Sl. 47/XI).

Penance is often misinterpreted as an escape from the sin (Das, 1995). May be this view holds true to some extent, When penance is considered as a social ritual. But performance of penance is a course of optional gives a chance for realisation. If some one commits a sin, he may perform penance for mental satisfaction from psychological point of view. Hence penance can not be considered

Table 3: List of biota, the sinful killing of which a penance is prescribed (vide Chapter XI of Manusmriti)

<i>English name (Buhler)</i>	<i>Sanskrit name (Manu)</i>	<i>Scientific name (Behura, 1980)</i>
A. Animals:		
a. Mammals (Sl. 69, 110, 116, 117, 132, 135, 136, 137, 138/XI)		
Donkey	<i>Khara</i>	<i>Equus hemionus</i>
Horse	<i>Aswa</i>	<i>Equus caballus</i>
Camel	<i>Ushira</i>	<i>Cervus sp.</i>
Deer	<i>Mruga</i>	<i>Cervus sp., Axis sp., Muntiacus muntjak</i>
Monkey	<i>Baanara</i>	<i>Macaca sp., Presbytis sp</i>
Elephant	<i>Ibhaanaam</i>	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
Goat	<i>Ajaa</i>	<i>Capra hircus</i>
Sheep	<i>Bikadhah</i>	<i>Ovis aries</i>
Buffalow	<i>Maheesha</i>	<i>Bubalus bubalis</i>
Cow	<i>Gow</i>	<i>Bos sp</i>
Cat	<i>Maarjaara</i>	<i>Felis domesticus</i>
Ichneumon (Mongoose)	<i>Nukula</i>	<i>Herpestes sp</i>
Dog	<i>Swaana</i>	<i>Cuon sp</i>
Wild pig	<i>Baraaha</i>	<i>Sus scrofa, Hylochoerus meinerzhageni</i>
Wild beast (Carnivorous/herbivorous)	<i>Krabyaa/Akrabyaa</i>	
b. Birds (Sl. 132, 135 and 136/XI)		
Blue jay	<i>Chaansham</i>	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
Owls	<i>Ullukam</i>	<i>Athene brama, Bubo sp</i>
Crow	<i>Kaakam</i>	See Table 2
Swan	<i>Hansam</i>	do
Duck	<i>Balaakaa</i>	do
Falcon	<i>Swena</i>	<i>Falco peregrinator</i>
Parrot	<i>Sukam</i>	See Table 2
Heron	<i>Krauncharn</i>	do
Peacock	<i>Barhinam / Mayura</i>	do
Bhasa (*) (Vulchurs & kites)	<i>Bhaasam</i>	<i>Gyps bengalensis, Neophron percnoterus Halastur indicus</i>
c. Reptiles:		
Snakes	<i>Ahi, Sarpam</i>	(Sl. 69, 140/XI)
Iguna	<i>Godhi</i>	(Sl. 132/XI)
d. Amphibians:		
Frog/Toad	<i>Mandukam</i>	<i>Rana tigrina, Bufo melanostictus</i>
e. Fishes		
Small animals that have bones	<i>Meena</i>	(Sl. 69/XI)
Boanless animals	<i>Asthimattaam</i>	(Sl. 141, 142/XI)
Insects small and large	<i>Anasthaam</i>	(Sl. 141, 142/XI)
	<i>Krumi, keeta</i>	(Sl. 71/XI)
B. Plants:		
a. Injuring living plants and Cutting down green trees for firewood		(Sl.64, 65/XI)
b. Cutting of Fruit trees		(Sl. 143/XI)
c. Shrubs, Creepers, Linanas of flowering plants		(Sl. 143/XI)
d. Destroy agricultural species for no good purpose and plants spontaneously springing up in forest.		(Sl. 145, 146/XI)
C. Microbes: (Sattwaanaam-Life from substrates)		
Destroying any kind of creatures, breed in food, in condiment, in fruits or in flowers. The expiation is to eat clarified butter (Buhler, 1886) Sl. 144/XI.		
D. Human Embryo: (Garbham-agnyaatam-itideva) Sl. 88/XI		

(*) Scientific Names could not be identified, the meaning could be traced out from an encyclopaedia (Prahara, 1937).

as nullifying factor against any wrong action. In other words the fear for penance (possibility of unrevealing sin before public) puts a self-restriction and prevents a person from committing any offence. This latter view of penance was a tactful presentation in *Manusmurti* for the conservation of the biota by creating consciousness about non killing of animals from ecological point of view.

Killing of animals and plants of different categories, which are classified for its expiation is beyond the scope of this paper. However the list of animals and plants whose killing needs a penance are given in table 3 which is specifically mentioned in *Manusmurti* to elevate the eco-consciousness and encourage conservation of biota in the society.

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